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O F T H E
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GENERAL JUDGMENT.

I N the year 1645, Mr. J. E. concealed himself in his initials, while saying, (in his treatise of *the two olive trees*, p. 42.) that “though the Lord has revealed, and men may “know the *year*, yet the *day* and *hour* of “judgment can no man know.” On the contrary, excellent men assert, one after another, (I know not how *many* of them!) that “it is the “height of presumption, to pretend to know “any thing about the time of the judgment “day.” As birds, however, cannot fly by feathers, though ever so numerous or beautiful, which are tied on to their bodies, but only by those with which nature has furnished their wings; so faith respects no decisions but God’s, and flies only by those wings, with which it apprehends that a divine testimony has furnished it. At the same time, we know that error, as
A well

2 *The Time which the Creation took up.*

well as truth, has often boasted, both of its gray hairs, and of the number and quality of its advocates. But, as it is not in men or angels, either to create a new, or annihilate an old truth, so my comfort is, that whatever is *true*, will be *soon* and *long* popular; and, if the following ideas are *not true*, my readers can reject them.

Many both jewish and christian writers have asserted, that as the seventh year was the year of remission to the jews, so the seventh millenary, which is emphatically called the *millennium*, shall be the millenary of remission; that *the Lord alone may be exalted in that day*. This was the general doctrine of the three first christian centuries, as Bishop Newton has shewn, from the writings of *St. Barnabas*, in the first; from *Justin Martyr*, in the second; from *Tertullian*, in the third; and from *Lactantius*, in the fourth century*. The scriptures, to which they refer us, in support of this opinion, are chiefly these two, viz. 2 Pet. iii. 8. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years*; and Gen. ii. 1—3. which informs us, that *the heavens and the earth were finished* in six days; and that *God rested on the seventh day, and blessed, and sanctified it*. And, that these passages are quoted pertinently to their purpose, appears from Isaiah xlv. 10. where it is

* See his Dissertations on Prophecy, vol. iii. p. 317—327.
laid

represents the Time of the World's Age. 3

laid down as a general proposition, that God declares the END, taken absolutely, as well as the end of those events which are most interesting to the church (the words cannot fairly be restricted to either of these senses), *from the BEGINNING**; and *from ancient times* the things which are not yet done; saying, *my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*: and this is announced as an appropriate character of the true God; see ver. 9. chap. xli. 22. xliii. 9. xliv. 7. xlv. 21. But how did he declare the end from the beginning? Surely not in words; if so, men would have known from the beginning, when to expect the end of all things; which was not necessary, either to their duty or happiness: but he declared it by deeds; and, about 712 years before Christ's time, he informed his prophet *Isaiah*, that he had notified the end from the beginning; and thereby ordered us to spell out the time, by adding one portion of the time of his works of creation to another. And, to preserve us from making mistakes in this computation, by another of his servants he tells us, about A. D. 61, that with him *one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*; therefore *one day* represents *a thousand years*; and, *vice versa*, each successive *thousand years* of the world's age, leads us back to that *one day* of the creation,

* Bishop Lowth renders it,

“From the beginning making known the end.”

with which it corresponds, and to which, perhaps, its events bear some similitude.

It is said of each of the six first days of the creation, *the morning and the evening was such a day*; but it is not said so of the seventh day, though that was doubtless of the same length as the other days; because it was designed to be a figure of the eternal rest of the saints in heaven. These seven days then prefigured the seven thousand years of the world's age; and the seventh day very fitly represented the expected *millennium*, which will be God's rest and ours. And, probably, after the seventh day, the creatures passed in review before Adam, that he might give them names: then Eden was planted, the man put into it, and a law given him. Here, perhaps, for the first time since his creation on the sixth day, Adam sleeps, viz. in Eden; and the woman is taken out of his side. At least, the account of these things follows that of the sabbath; and some of them were much fitter to be done on the eighth day, than on that day which the Lord had blessed and sanctified for his own, and man's rest. God had virtually finished creation in six days; yet it was not absolutely compleated till these things were done, that is, till Eden was planted, and furnished with its inhabitant, and the woman taken out of the man. *Moses* has not told us what time these things took up; but *John*, in *Patmos*, may have

have eventually informed us, by his account of the winding up of time. Doubtless they might be accomplished in the three first hours of the eighth day; for God's concluding works are always the most speedy. But three hours of a *day*, which represented a *thousand years*, is analogous to 125 years. Add these to the 7000 years above, and they bring us to A. M. 7125, or A. D. 3125; which, I hope, I have proved is the last account of time, which God has given us in the Revelation: for the 1260 years of the two *witnesses*, which is the time of the sixth trumpet, began with those two abominations, Popery and Mahometanism, against which they were to testify, in A. D. 606: to which two numbers add also the 1260 years of the seventh trumpet; and these together bring us to about A. D. 3125; see my Remarks on the Revelation, p. 115—119, and 145—149, and 293. Benevolence cannot delight to censure these things, nor will do it without inquiry; and he that cannot, or will not inquire, may have his *opinion*, but can form no *judgment* upon this subject, either to his own, or others profit.

The above however assigns a reason, why the Lord went so leisurely to work in the creation (and specified so exactly the operations of every day), viz. because he would declare the end of time, by the time which he took up in the creating all things.

But

6 *The Year of Judgment known,*

But did not Christ say, Mark xiii. 33. *Watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.* True; but the word is not χρόνος, the *time*, but καιρος, the *season*; of which there are four in every year. And that our Lord intends the lesser divisions of time, is plain from ver. 35. *Ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning.* And if he had only designed to say, that they knew nothing about the *year* of his coming to judgment, the above words would not have been adapted, to give them also the necessary warning, about the uncertainty of the time, when they should be removed out of the world. Christ said also, *of that day and that hour knoweth no one, no not the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father,* ver. 32. and Mat. xxiv. 36. But I take the *day and hour* here nearly literally, that is, for the lesser divisions of time, in opposition to the larger division of a *year*.

1. Because I dare not extend the time which Christ did not know, beyond what his own words, viz. the *day and hour*, necessarily signify; especially as his not knowing the lesser divisions of time, with respect to this grand event, would as fully demonstrate his dependence upon the Father, and subserviency to his will; as if he had been ignorant also of the *year*.

2. Because

2. Because the words are spoken of the time of *Jerusalem's* destruction, as well as of the day of judgment. The *ἐκείνης ἡμέρας*, of *that day*, ver. 36. seems to imply, that whatever day was intended, it had been spoken of, or referred to before. Now ver. 3, 5, and especially ver. 20 and 34, manifestly speak of *Jerusalem's* destruction; which is also our Lord's subject, ver. 40, 41. and therefore, I apprehend, cannot fairly be excluded at ver. 36. though that verse speaks also of the day of judgment. Understanding it therefore of *Jerusalem's* destruction, Daniel had predicted the *year* of that catastrophe, ch. ix. 25—27. and, though that prophecy was mysterious, I am not willing to suppose, without proof, that neither *the son* of man, nor any *angel in heaven* understood it, before it was accomplished. Besides, as our Lord foretold that *Jerusalem's* destruction would occur in that generation; and yet at such a distance of time, as to give room for the gradual accomplishment of the signs preceding it, which he had so exactly predicted, it may well be doubted, how he could be ignorant of about the *year* in which it was to occur; though it was not needful that he should be informed, at that time, either of the *day*, or of the *hour* of it.

3. Our Lord has seemed to declare the *year* of the general judgment knowable, by the four adumbrations by which he has represented it,

it, viz. *Noah's* flood, *Jerusalem's* destruction, the *servant* who expected his master's return such a night, and the *householder*, who was only not informed at what watch the thief would come; in every one of which instances, the larger division of time was supposed to be known, but not the lesser*. This could not have occurred without design; and was doubtless intended to excite an expectation of the farther discoveries, which were to be made in the *Revelation* of St. John. At the same time, as these adumbrations declared the *year* of judgment knowable, the *day* and *hour* as contrasted with it, which are declared to be unknown, must signify the lesser periods of time.

4. Though I do not find any passage of scripture, except relative to this subject, where the *day* and *hour* are mentioned together and alone, by which their meaning here might be illustrated; yet there are in the *Revelation*, at least two instances, in which the *day* and *hour* occur, in the same sense as we have here given. In the present *Sardian* period, I apprehend, we know in what *year* our Lord will come, in the slaying of his *witnesses*, and in the begun depredations of the *second* beast; yet, as he will come as the *thief* spoken of before, he declares, ch. iii. 3. *thou shalt not*

* See my Remarks on the Rev. p. 307—310.

know

know what hour I will come upon thee. And, in yet plainer language, *the 200 millions of Turkish horsemen*, who were to destroy the eastern Roman empire, are said to be *prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year*, ch. ix. 15, 16. in which the lesser periods of time are clearly distinguished from the larger, while the events of both are declared to be under the divine controul.

Archbishop Tillotson* apprehends, that the *hour*, in these words, signifies a larger portion of time than the *day*; because it would make our Saviour's expression flat to say, that he *knew not the hour*, in the common sense of that word, after he had said, that he *knew not the day*; and because, says he, "the four seasons of the year are by the Greeks called *ωραι*, "*hours*." But this idea agrees as well with the present, as with that popular interpretation of the words, which his lordship defends. And, whether this *day and hour* signifies *time* in general, or its lesser divisions, as no christian doubts whether it was possible for the *son of man* to receive, after his ascension to heaven, a farther revelation, with respect to the day of judgment, as well as relative to the events which were to precede it; so, I hope, I have proved, that he has also given us an account of about the *year*, in that Revelation, which concludes the sacred canon; though we are

* See his Works, vol. iii. p. 164.

not certain whether it is still true of Christ or not, as well as of his servants, in the sense we assert, that he does not, even now, *know the day and hour* of judgment.

I have only to consider farther, on this subject, 1 Thes. v. 1—5. from which we learn, that there will be *χρονους και καιρους*, *times and seasons* of the day of judgment, that is, different *times and seasons*; for the righteous will be raised, and judged before the wicked, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52*. Of these *times and seasons* the apostle says, that it would have been congruous to their characters, as the friends of Christ, that he should have *written* to them, if the word which saved them had not before informed them, that, with respect to the wicked, whatever warnings they have had, *the day of the Lord* will come to them *as a thief in the night*. At the same time, he assures them, that their own new nature, as *children of the light and of the day*, either now gives, or insures to them, as well as capacitates them to take in, all such discoveries on this head, as will be farther needful for them. Being *of the light and of the day*, (1.) They see its sacred scenes, and that there are yet many prophecies unaccomplished; but Christ cannot come till these are all fulfilled. (2.) They hear its sounds; and know, in some measure, what God and men are saying, and doing. And, (3.) they

* See my Remarks on the Rev. p. 311—313.

are prepared to enjoy, and improve what may be hereafter opened to them, by the word, spirit, and providences of God. And, as there were other inspired writings to be added to the sacred canon, after the apostle had written this epistle; so their being *of the day* adapted them to attend to his second epistle to them, to the writings of *Peter*, and to the *Revelation* given in *Patmos*; which specified the events which the church was to expect, and the times of many of them, as well as the appointed end of all. And if the servants of God, at A. D. 3125, see no prophecy, but that of the general judgment unfulfilled, they will naturally expect the coming of their Lord in a few days; (though they still *know neither the day nor the hour*, Mat. xxv. 13.) especially if they then see, that the *Revelation* had given them accounts of time, which reach only to that year.

How greatly has the Lord honoured his church, thus to intrust them with his secrets! But shall we not seek a better world, while we see to the end of this? At the same time, if any christian, or minister, will kindly shew me, that I have mistaken the words of my great MASTER, either in the above, or in any other points, he will highly oblige,

His truly affectionate Brother and Servant,
in the Gospel of Christ,

Taunton,
July 8th, 1785.

Tho. Reader.

P. S. As

P. S. As *more than seven horns, and seven eyes* are, in scripture, attributed to some *creatures*; see Ezek. x. 12. Rev. vi. 6, 8. xiii. 1. therefore, certainly, the *seven horns, and seven eyes of the Lamb, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth*, Zech. iii. 9. iv. 10. Rev. iv. 5. v. 6. cannot be chiefly designed to describe the personal perfection in our Lord; but that perfection which respects dispensation towards the world, viz. in the *seven periods* of the christian church. And as this doctrine of the periods glorifies God, and promotes holiness and happiness, while it gives additional perspicuity, propriety, amplitude, elegance, and dignity to every one of the *seven epistles* in the *Revelation*, I cannot but earnestly recommend it to the devout inquiry of humble christians. We are now, I apprehend, under the *Sardian* period; therefore, read the *epistle* to Sardis, as especially directed of God to the present churches of Christ. See *Remarks on the three first chapters of the Revelation*. 1785.

F I N I S.

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